

U.S. plots takeover of Syria and Iran

By Joyce Chediak

March 20 — The first heavy fighting is taking place in Syria's capital, Damascus, between alleged "defectors" and the Syrian security forces. Four days earlier, two huge explosions ripped through intelligence and security buildings in Christian areas of Damascus on March 16, killing at least 27 people — both civilians and security personnel.

These bombings marked the fourth time in three months that powerful explosions have hit government buildings in Damascus and Aleppo. The recent attacks are clear attempts to destabilize Syria and seem to confirm revelations from U.S. strategic think-tanks discussed below of U.S./NATO plots aimed at "regime change."

Background to plot against Syria, Iran

The establishment media is full of speculation about whether the U.S. and its NATO allies will intervene directly in Syria and Iran. The war, however, has already begun. It is being waged on the propaganda and the political front, in the banks and boardrooms, and according to recent WikiLeaks, on the covert military front as well. Every week this war intensifies.

From Al Jazeera to the New York Times to Le Monde, the corporate media pitch is the same — the U.S. and the European powers want to "protect" the people of the Middle East from a possible nuclear armed Iran; they want to "save" the Syrian people from President Bashir Assad.

The true aims of the Western powers, along with Turkey and the reactionary Arab regimes in the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab League, are to destroy the independence of Syria and Iran and to make them satellites of imperialism.

A great deal is at stake here for the city workers and rural poor throughout the Middle East. The real issue right now is: Who will prevail in the region, the anti-imperialist forces or the imperialists?

Emboldened by its win in Libya, imperialism is now going after Syria and Iran at the same time. These governments are in a strategic anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist alliance, along with Hezbollah in Lebanon. This alliance is crucial in holding back Israel, which has no declared borders, from a military attack and an attempt to take over the whole area. It is crucial to stopping the U.S. from re-enslaving the whole area.

Washington would like to be seen as the protector of the "Arab Spring" against Assad. But Wall Street

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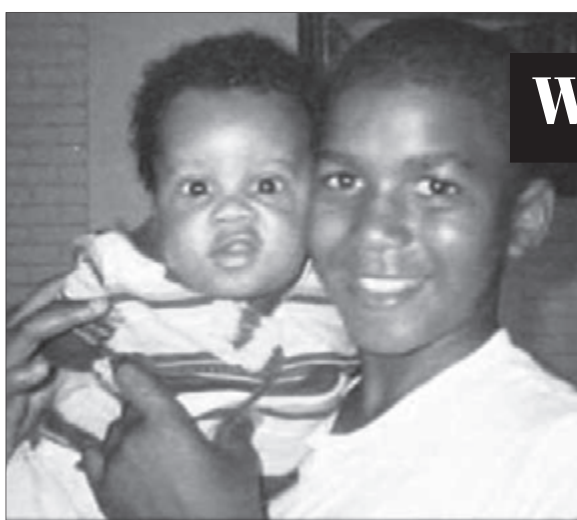
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Trayvon Martin holding infant.



WWW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

P.O. NOT FOR SALE! Postal workers rally

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Mass arrests follow OWS return to Zuccotti Park

PHOTO: JULIAN KLINER

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BULLETIN: As we go to press, police have forcibly removed many OWS occupiers from Union Square Park at 1 a.m. on March 21.

By Caleb T. Maupin
New York

March 17 was the sixth-month anniversary of Occupy Wall Street. In the late evening, a crowd of hundreds gathered in historic Zuccotti Park, now dubbed Liberty Plaza. Many organizers and progressive forces attending the annual Left Forum at Pace University, very close to the park, joined OWS activists.

The youth gathered in the park for hours, playing drums and refusing to leave. The crowd gradually swelled as the evening went on. A small contingent of youth from Workers World Party circled the square chanting, "Just like Ho Chi Minh! Occupy is gonna win!" Others joined in this anti-imperialist chant.

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ATLANTA

Protest hits repressive bills

About 1,500 people, including union members, DREAMer students, immigrant rights activists, women’s health defenders and Occupy Atlanta, rallied against repressive legislation on March 17. The rally was called by a coalition of groups opposed to a number of different bills working their way through the Georgia General Assembly.

The most controversial, Senate Bill 469, criminalizes mass picketing at places where there is a labor dispute, disallows dues check-offs for unions, and makes planning a demonstration or civil disobedience a conspiracy crime — among many other attempts to repress free speech and union rights.

Another bill highlighted at the rally was an attack on union health care. Known as SB 460, it would allow employers to disallow contraceptives in their insurance plans if they claim to be morally opposed to birth control. And in a slap in the face to the poor and unemployed, SB



292 is being pushed forward to require a drug test for recipients of public relief, including food stamps.

The legislature is also trying to amend a repressive anti-immigrant law passed last year to make it stand up better in the courts. The rally was preceded by a picket line that ringed the Capitol with many chants against SB 469.

— Report & photo by Jimmy Raynor

‘No courage, no change’

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

It was a courageous act of solidarity. Two undocumented students risked deportation at a “Coming Out of the Shadows” action here on March 14 to demand the release of a fellow undocumented immigrant. They were arrested for blocking traffic in front of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement office in Philadelphia.

The protest was organized by DreamActivists/PA as part of a national week of action called by the National Immigrant Youth Alliance. Around 100 undocumented students and their supporters took a stand against deportations that are tearing apart families and communities.

During a rally in Love Park and the march that followed, they chanted, “No courage, no change,” “Education, not deportation” and “Immigrants are fighting here, no papers, no fear!”

Wearing T-shirts bearing the day’s popular slogan of “Undocumented, unafraid and unapologetic,” Tania Chairez, 19, a University of Pennsylvania sophomore whose family immigrated from Mexico, and Jessica Heyjin Lee, 20, a Bryn Mawr College junior whose family came from South Korea, blocked traffic for more than an hour. They sat atop two large banners — one with the same message as their shirts, the second reading, “Coming out of the shadows.”

Before their arrests, Chairez and Lee entered the ICE building and presented a letter to Field Office Director Thomas Becker demanding the release of Miguel Orellana Garcia, a DREAMer from Pennsylvania who has been held in the York Detention Center for eight months. Born in El Salvador, Orellana lived in Allentown, Pa., for 16 years. He has a young family to support, including a U.S.-born fiancée and two young children. If he is sent back to El Salvador, Orellana could be killed.

The young women took turns relaying stories of their

parents’ struggles to raise their families under the constant fear of deportation and separation. They told how their undocumented status impacted their opportunities to advance their education.

Chairez spoke of the hurt from hearing racial slurs directed against her family as a young child. Lee spoke of her constant fear while driving in the family car that they would be pulled over by police and their status revealed.

The two women also recorded video testimonies before the demonstration that start, “If you are seeing this, it is because I have been arrested.”

In her video, Chairez speaks of growing up seeing “a lot of attacks on my family just because of the color of their skin, not because anyone knew about their status.” Chairez expressed the hope that her actions would “help other undocumented youth feel empowered and ... to stop being afraid. It is better to be publicly undocumented where you have the support group, where people can stand up for each other, than to sit at home in fear.”

Lee states that she “risked arrest and deportation because I felt the need for my community to be empowered. A lot of high school youth are uncertain about their futures because they are undocumented. I see a lot of fear among adults who don’t feel safe in their communities because of their status.

“I thought I was the only undocumented person in my neighborhood,” she continued. “I couldn’t explain to my friends why I couldn’t drive or why I was having a hard time getting accepted into college. It is important for undocumented youth to not feel stigmatized by our status. We are the same as anyone else in America. We need to show the undocumented communities that it is O.K. to come out and be leaders for human rights in this country.”

Fortunately, both Chairez and Lee were released by Philadelphia police the next day. ICE did not get involved. Their videos are available on YouTube. □

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People's Power tour aims to unite struggles

By Monica Moorehead
New York

The People's Power tour was launched in New York on March 11. The tour seeks to bring working, poor and oppressed people into a nationwide discussion to help develop a unifying fightback program of action. Its literature points to the life-and-death social issues that are intensified by the current global capitalist economic crisis, such as "unemployment, low wages, foreclosures, police and ICE terror, racist incarcerations, hunger and homelessness."

Armed with this orientation, the tour moved on from New York to well-attended meetings in Philadelphia on March 12, Baltimore on March 13 and Los Angeles on March 18. All the strategy meetings featured former Georgia congressperson and anti-war leader Cynthia McKinney and tour representative Larry Hales, an organizer against budget cuts in New York.

In **NEW YORK** at Judson Memorial Church, a standing-room-only crowd heard a panel of diverse speakers. Hales chaired the meeting. Berna Ellorin from BAYAN-USA emphasized the need to integrate all the local struggles with an anti-imperialist perspective.

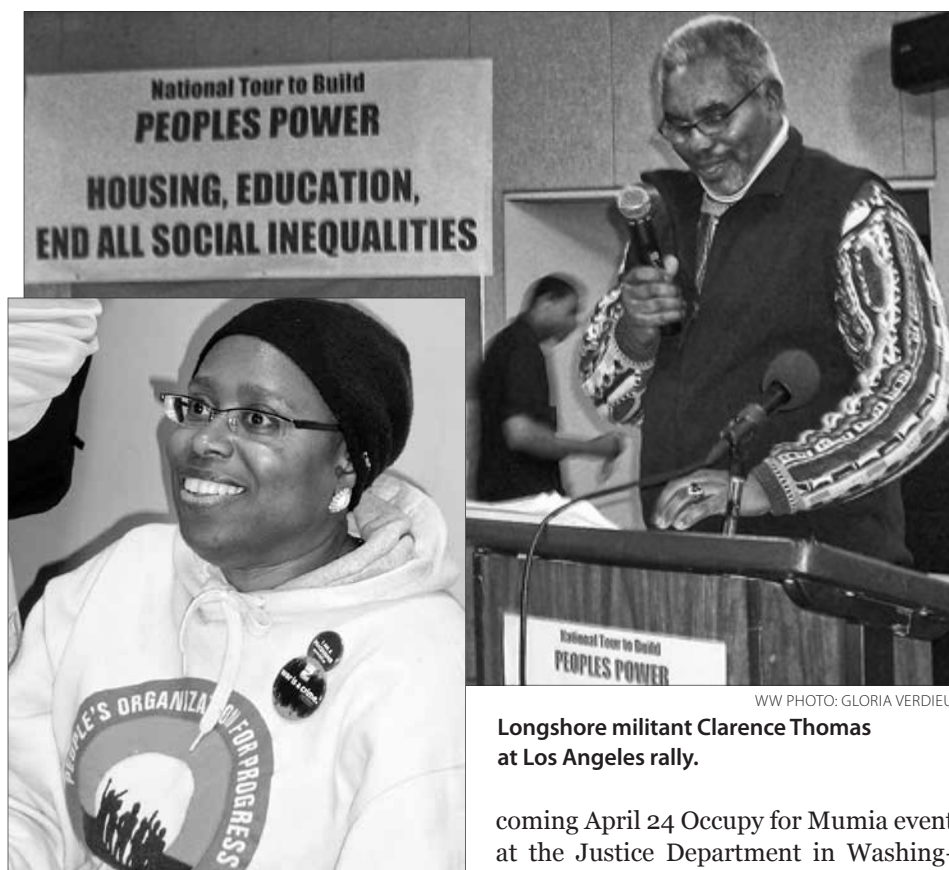
Victor Toro, a long-time Chilean activist facing deportation, spoke on building working-class unity with a major focus on the plight of 12 million undocumented workers forced to come to the U.S. He called for legalization of all immigrants. In motivating for May Day 2012, Toro stated, "The conflict with Wall Street is the cause of all the ills in our society and around the world."

Jen Waller, an Occupy Wall Street organizer, described OWS as: "A movement of people who feel they have nothing to lose. They have abandoned family, friends, relationships to devote themselves to the movement. The main message is to call out the 1%."

Cynthia McKinney said, "We need a transfer of state power from those who oppress us to 'we the people.' We will demonstrate the people's will."

Retired postal worker Eleanor Bailey recalled the 1970 postal strike and spoke about the current struggle to save the jobs of 200,000 postal workers and 3,000 post offices. (Google "workers worldleanorbailey" for a summary of her remarks.)

Larry Holmes of Bail Out the People and Occupy 4 Jobs told the audience, "The capitalists can't provide a system of people before profits. We have to begin



WW PHOTO: GLORIA VERDIEU

Longshore militant Clarence Thomas at Los Angeles rally.

coming April 24 Occupy for Mumia event at the Justice Department in Washington, D.C.

Young activists from Occupy Philly, along with seasoned activists primarily from oppressed communities, were in attendance. Listen to the meeting at www.deepgreenphilly.com/?p=681.

In **LOS ANGELES** at the University of Southern California, IAC leader John Parker introduced the speakers. Clarence Thomas, of International Longshore & Warehouse Local 10, described the victorious port shutdowns in association with Occupy Oakland and the need to build better cooperation between the rank and file from the union movement and the communities they work in.

Kuusela Hilo of BAYAN-USA spoke about the national liberation struggle in the Philippines against U.S. imperialism and the link to Filipino immigrants in the U.S. Ron Gochez of Union del Barrio told of winning local concessions regarding the unjust confiscation at checkpoints of cars operated by undocumented people. KB Solomon, a cultural artist, sang a stirring rendition of "Ol' Man River." Larry Hales explained the necessity of a national coordination against U.S. capitalism and its deadly attacks on workers felt around the world.

John Catalinotto, John Parker and Betsey Piette contributed to this article.

Anti-war forces plan to confront NATO

UNAC meeting to discuss slogans for May action

By John Catalinotto

Chicago authorities announced March 20 that the city had rejected a permit for anti-war groups to protest at the NATO summit meeting in Chicago on May 20. Anti-war organizers in Chicago say they are confident they will again win the permit struggle and the right to protest within sight and sound range of the generals.

The next step toward the anti-NATO action is a conference of the United National Antiwar Committee in Stamford, Conn., on March 23-25. This conference will discuss the direction of the anti-war movement in the U.S. for the coming period.

Along with regional organizers in the Midwest, including those from the Occupy movement in Chicago, UNAC has been preparing for a major spring anti-war action as the summit of top NATO generals and government leaders takes place in May.

In the past year, NATO carried out the bloody bombing of Libya and the overthrow of that North African country's government. NATO has official responsibility for the mainly U.S. occupation of Afghanistan, and is threatening intervention against Syria. In other words, NATO has affirmed its role as an instrument of worldwide counterrevolution.

Internationally, anti-war forces in Europe have called a "No to NATO" protest on April 1 in Brussels. Also, on May 17-19 in Frankfurt, Germany, the group Libertad has called actions "against the policies implemented by the European Central Bank, European Union and IMF, also called the Troika, under the pretext of fighting the so-called financial crisis of the European Union."

Imperialists retreat

Until the first week in March, the G8 countries — the most powerful imperialist countries plus capitalist Russia — were also planning a summit in Chicago during

the same weekend as the NATO summit in mid-May. The imperialist countries had planned the NATO and G8 summits much earlier, before the workers' revolt in Wisconsin and the Occupy movement showed the potential for an impressive, militant protest demonstration.

Washington revised its plans to hold both meetings in Chicago on March 5. By then it had dawned on them that having both at the same time showed openly the connections between the world's most unpopular bankers and industrialists — the 1% of the 1% — and their top hired guns in NATO. So President Barack Obama opted instead to invite the G8 bankers to Camp David, Md., thus separating the two summits and keeping the hated billionaires apart from any population center.

The Coalition Against NATO and the G8 then decided to move its demonstration from May 19 to May 20 to coincide with the NATO summit. CANG8 had won a permit to demonstrate on the earlier day after a long struggle with the Chicago government.

Meanwhile, UNAC is holding a conference starting March 23 where hundreds of activists will gather to discuss slogans and positions on the current and possible future wars led by Pentagon and NATO aggression.

UNAC established its credentials as a broad anti-war coalition with a conference of 800 people in Albany, N.Y., in the summer of 2010, followed by anti-war protests of thousands in New York and San Francisco in April 2011.

The list of speakers and participants at the UNAC conference shows once again that UNAC remains the broadest, most activist of existing U.S. anti-war coalitions.

For more information about the Stamford conference, including a list of speakers and the conference schedule, see nepajac.org. For information about the May 20 Chicago demonstration, see cang8.wordpress.com. □

to demand power — locally, nationally, globally. It trumps capitalism."

The panel was followed by an open mic session and then breakout groups where a people's program was discussed.

In **PHILADELPHIA**, Berta Joubert-Ceci of the Philadelphia chapter of the International Action Center, chaired the meeting.

Pam Africa, from International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, noted that even when the odds don't seem to be in our favor, people determined to fight back can win our demands, citing Mumia Abu-Jamal's recent release from death row and solitary confinement as an example.

Margarita Padin, a Puerto Rican construction worker and leader of the fight for inclusion of women, Black and Latino/a workers in several major construction projects at Temple University, gave an account of their struggle to get jobs for people from the neighborhood that surrounds the north Philadelphia campus.

Mexicana activist Ana Martina reported on efforts to stop Pennsylvania's anti-immigrant legislation, including a May 7 "May Day" rally in Harrisburg, the state capital. Jamila Wilson spoke on the up-

CUBAN 5, MUMIA

April actions to say free political prisoners

By Cheryl LaBash

The struggle to free political prisoners will focus on Washington, D.C., in April.

Five Days to Free the Cuban Five begins April 17 and continues through a demonstration on April 21 at the White House. The theme will be "Obama, give me Five," referring to the five Cubans held in the U.S. against their will.

New York-Washington bus tickets costing \$5 round trip are available for the Freedom Ride to Free the Five on Saturday, April 21, which ends at the White House protest. For more information or to become a sponsor and reserve a seat, call 917-887-8710; email casadela-sameras@unacuba.org; or go to



july26coalition.org. More details and updated information about the Five Days for the Cuban Five are found at www.theCuban5.org.

Then on April 24, also in Washington, D.C., supporters of Mumia Abu-Jamal

Continued on page 11

Women warriors in labor history

The following is an edited selection from a talk by Martha Grevatt, a long-time autoworker and union militant, given March 17 in Detroit at a Workers World Party commemoration of International Working Women’s Day.

The struggle for the eight-hour workday culminated in a day of action on May 1, 1886, called by the American Federation of Labor. About a quarter of a million took part in many cities, but Chicago, with its militant left-wing labor movement, had the largest demonstration. There, tens of thousands laid down their tools, and women and men poured into the streets. The demonstrations continued past May 1, and on May 3 police attacked and six workers were killed.

The next day a protest over the killings was held in Haymarket Square. A bomb was thrown, a policeman was killed, and a struggle broke out that left seven police and four workers dead. Eight workers’ leaders were convicted of murder, five of them sentenced to death. Four were hanged and one reportedly committed suicide. The other three were eventually pardoned.

Women in Chicago were active in all the labor federations that supported the call for the May Day demonstration. Lucy

Parsons, Lizzie Holmes and Sarah Ames were leaders of women dressmakers who joined the walkout. Their organization, the International Working Peoples Association, had “equality of rights without distinction to sex or race” in its platform.

Lucy Parsons, a woman of African-American, Mexican and Native descent, became a widow when her spouse, Albert Parsons, was executed for the trumped-up murder charges that arose from the Haymarket struggle. The Parsons had moved to Chicago in 1873 where they were both steeped in the labor movement. They had two children. They were both tireless activists.

In the months leading up to Albert’s martyrdom on Nov. 11, 1887, and continuing until the pardon of the other three defendants, Lucy campaigned around their innocence. She was arrested on numerous occasions, including when she tried to break through the police line to see Albert in his final hours.

In 1905, Parsons was one of the founders of the Industrial Workers of the World. By then she was well established as a powerful orator. The Chicago police had labeled her “more dangerous than 1,000 rioters.”

Parsons roused the crowds at the first IWW convention. There she expounded

on a new, unconventional strike tactic — a stay-in strike that later became known as the sit-down. “My conception of the strike of the future is not to strike and go out and starve, but to strike and remain in and take possession of the necessary property of production,” Parsons argued. Six years later the IWW waged the first stay-in, “folded-arms” strike at a General Electric plant in Schenectady, N.Y. — and won.

Parsons spoke out against lynchings and fought frameups — including those of Sacco and Vanzetti, Tom Mooney and the Scottsboro Nine — her whole long life. She died in a house fire in 1942 at 89.

Fighting to end child labor

Another woman engaged in the historic Haymarket struggle was the Dublin-born Mary Harris Jones — the famous Mother Jones. She was born in the 1830s and moved with her family to Canada as a teenager, later moving to Monroe, Mich., and Chicago.

After her marriage in 1861 to the leader of the National Union of Molders, George Jones, she was introduced to what would be a lifelong career — labor activist. After George and their four children died during a yellow fever epidemic 10 years later, Jones moved back to Chicago where she

too worked as a dressmaker. She was very involved with the more conservative Knights of Labor, which nevertheless took part in the May 1 coalition in Chicago.

The Knights were already declining as workers looked to more militant groups at that time like the AFL and the International Working People’s Association, a precursor of the IWW. As the Knights declined, Jones became entrenched in the fight of the mineworkers, from West Virginia to Colorado, for a decent wage and better working conditions.

Around this time, as she approached the age of 60, she took on the persona of “Mother Jones.” John D. Rockefeller tagged her “the most dangerous woman in America.” One of her passions was the struggle to end child labor. In 1903, she organized a march of children from Philadelphia to the Long Island, N.Y., home of President Theodore Roosevelt to dramatize the plight of children working in the mines and textile mills.

In 1905, Jones, like Parsons, was one of 12 women delegates to the founding convention of the IWW. Also a fiery orator, she had earlier roused the miners to do battle with the owners. She died in 1930 reportedly at 93, although she claimed to be 100. Still a legend, her legacy inspired women miners and family members during the 1989 Pittston coal strike to form “Daughters of Mother Jones.”

Lucy Parsons and Mother Jones were not the only women leaders in the IWW. Although we most often associate the group with men like Joe Hill, there were many women leaders. They didn’t always get the support they wanted from the male leadership, but they managed to organize many women and girls.

For example, Jane Street organized a union hiring hall in Denver for super-exploited domestic workers. The women acted collectively to keep wages from falling below a set rate by, one after another, answering want ads but refusing to work for less than that rate.

These leaders were all women who embraced the words of the preamble to the IWW’s constitution: “It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism.” □



The Detroit branch of Workers World Party celebrated International Working Women’s Day on March 17, saluting Warrior Woman Vanessa Fluker, anti-foreclosure attorney and fighter. Debbie Johnson chaired a rousing program that featured speakers Martha Grevatt on women’s many roles in labor struggles, Tachae Davis on reviving International Women’s

Day in the U.S., and Kris Hamel on assassinated Irish freedom fighter Mairead Farrell and the origins of women’s oppression and how to fight it. During a delicious dinner prepared by WWP male comrades, Cheryl LaBash presented stirring video clips of women’s struggles past and present.

— WW Detroit bureau

THYRA EDWARDS

Black woman internationalist

By Dolores Cox

Women have had to struggle for their place in life. They have had to fight for inclusion, equality and rights, which were traditionally only accorded to men. Women have fought for liberation, freedom — and even for their lives.

One such woman was Thyra Edwards, born in 1897 in Wharton, Texas. Her grandparents were born enslaved Africans, who escaped from Missouri to Illinois with the help of the Underground Railroad. Edwards grew up in Houston during the Jim Crow era, which lasted throughout her life.

Edwards continually looked for places for Black women to be activists in the international community. She was a teacher, journalist, lecturer and social worker, who took an interest in child welfare, even founding her own children’s home. She was a strong advocate for women’s rights, a labor organizer, union publicist, peace and civil rights activist, and a Pan-Africanist.

Edwards taught school in Houston, worked as a social worker in Gary, Ind., and Chicago, and moved to New York

to get employment as a journalist. She became interested in both child welfare legislation and labor relations. She combined her social work and interest in international affairs, gaining worldwide notoriety for her activism. Edwards also lived in Mexico, Italy, Spain, Denmark and the Soviet Union.

A. Philip Randolph, renowned labor head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and civil rights leader, was her special friend and mentor. He said that Edwards “is one of the most brilliant young women of the Negro or any other race, in public life today. She has not only a keen analytical mind, but a fine poise, modest charm and a fluency of presentation that will capture the admiration of the most critical.” (“Thyra J. Edwards, Black Activist in the Global Freedom Struggle,” University of Missouri Press, 2011)

Langston Hughes, Black playwright, novelist, poet and activist, was also Edwards’ friend from 1935 to 1941. Edwards edited The People’s Voice, a leftist newspaper created in 1942 by A. C. Powell Jr., and the Negro Digest, which frequently contained Hughes’ writings.



1897 - 1953

ist critique of world affairs to her readers.

In 1933, she joined the Chicago Scottsboro Action Committee to raise funds for legal appeals and new trials for the nine African-American youth in Alabama who had been falsely convicted of raping two white women on a freight train two years earlier. Through the International Labor Defense, the Communist Party took the lead in gathering support for the young men.

Edwards also worked with the CP’s Unemployed Council to actively protest apartment evictions. She was attracted by their militancy and ability to build alliances with other leftist groups to stop the evictions, and by their position on race and labor, emphasizing Black and white unity. In New York, Edwards worked closely with Benjamin Davis, a Harlem city councilperson and CP member.

Edwards’ involvement with the Loylists in the Spanish Civil War and her activities with U.S. communists led to an FBI investigation. Government intelligence organizations harassed her until she died at the age of 56 in 1953.

Throughout her life, Thyra Edwards maintained an interest in the condition of oppressed working-class people worldwide. □

In S.F. Bayview district

Longshore union helps fight foreclosure

By Dave Welsh
San Francisco

Dexter Cato is fighting eviction, and the community is helping by “reclaiming” his home. A dock worker and union carpenter, Cato was born and raised in the historically African-American neighborhood of Bayview/Hunters Point in San Francisco.

Nearly a hundred people massed at Cato’s house at 1401 Quesada in the pouring rain on March 16 to occupy the home and send a message to “community predator” Wells Fargo Bank: “Rescind the foreclosure sale and eviction of Dexter Cato. No more foreclosures for profit.”

Members of Cato’s union, the International Longshore & Warehouse Union, signed up on a clipboard and took shifts for a “people’s occupation” of his house. Eight ILWU members stood on the upstairs porch and led the crowd in chanting, “Nationalize the banks! Nationalize the banks!”

A neighbor spoke out: “They’re foreclosing on my home, too. It’s happening up and down this street. Wells Fargo and the other banks are terrorizing this community.”

“Why isn’t the government intervening to help these people?” asked Alex Haile, another neighbor. “It’s because the banks run the government, that’s why. This is not a people’s government. This is the capitalists’ government, and they don’t give a

damn about a worker losing his home.”

Mesha Monge-Irizarry, whose only son was murdered by police, shot at close range in a San Francisco movie theater, spoke out from Cato’s porch: “This neighborhood was built with the sweat and blood of Black people, who came here to work in the Hunters Point shipyard. Now their descendants are fighting to save their family homes — to keep from being forced out of their own community by these criminal banks. Power to the Hood!”

Call for moratorium on all foreclosures

The action was organized by the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment, successor to the ACORN organization in this state, which issued a statement:

“Dexter Cato, ACCE Foreclosure Fighter and ILWU member, and his family were victims of Wells Fargo’s ‘dual tracking’ program. That’s when one part of the bank says they want to work with you while a separate department continues to foreclose on your house. In 2009, after Dexter and his wife Christina (a city bus driver) had applied for a modification, his wife tragically passed away in a traffic accident. Still grieving, he is now the only supporter of their four children.”

According to ACCE, the bank offered Cato a modification and he promptly sent in a payment. However, the bank foreclosed anyway, sold his home at public

auction, and had the sheriff post a notice on his door to vacate.

“We are demanding that Dexter Cato and families throughout San Francisco get affordable modifications and that all banks ... apply a widespread MORATORIUM on all foreclosures,” the ACCE statement continued.

“Until then, for every home Wells and big banks take, ACCE Foreclosure Fighters, unions, clergy and the community are going to defend and take it back. If the banks refuse to do a moratorium on foreclosures, we will do our own until our demands are met.

“Right now, neighbors, unions, and supporters are re-claiming his home. They are committing to continue to take back homes until banks, like Wells Fargo, work with borrowers and apply a widespread moratorium on all foreclosures,” ACCE concluded.

One of the protesters at Cato’s house was Rosie Alvarado, who a week earlier had “occupied” her own home with 20 friends to forestall her own fraudulent eviction. However, this week was another story. While she and foreclosure fighter Delia Pedroza-Aguilar were in San Francisco helping to “reclaim” Cato’s house, armed police broke into Alvarado’s home in Antioch 50 miles away and ordered her family members out of the house. Al-

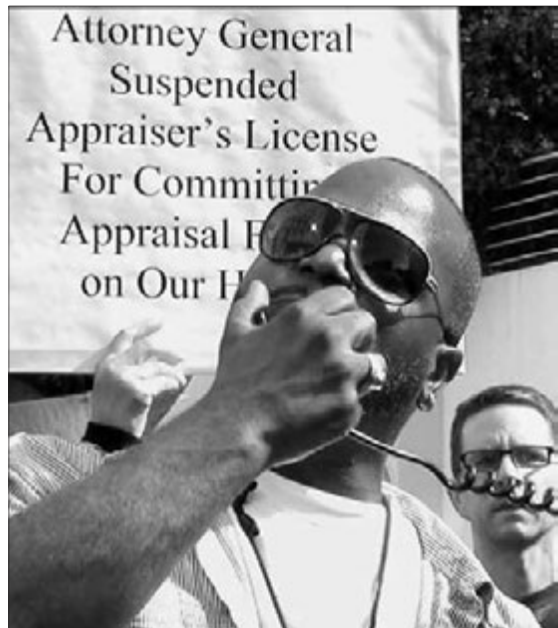


PHOTO: BILL CARPENTER

Dexter Cato

varado plans to file a complaint with the district attorney.

“I’m so sorry about what those [cops] did in Antioch,” said Mary Ratcliff, editor of the San Francisco Bay View newspaper, “but so grateful Rosie and Delia were able to drive the 50 miles to support Dexter Cato in the Bayview ... in the pouring, driving rain!”

People are asked to contact Rubin Pulido at rubin.pulido@wellsfargo.com or 415-852-1279 and demand that he rescind the sale and eviction of Dexter Cato. □

At NCAA basketball game

Puerto Rican athlete jeered by racist students

By Monica Moorehead

The NCAA Division I tournament is the most prestigious in all U.S. college basketball. It begins with 65 teams playing games in each of four regions in the country — West, East, North and South. Two weeks later the Final Four play to see which two teams will seek the national championship.

An incident occurred on March 15, the first day of the tournament, that reflects the charged racist, anti-immigrant atmosphere permeating every sector of capitalist society, including college sports. It happened right at the end of the first-round East regional game played in Pittsburgh between Kansas State University and the University of Southern Mississippi.

When KSU freshman point guard Angel Rodriguez shot free throws with seconds left in the game, he was met with a barrage of racist chants of “Where is your green card?” by members of the USM band. Rodriguez is Puerto Rican. His free throws won the game.

When the president of USM issued an apology to Angel Rodriguez, she actually spelled his name wrong.

Racist anti-immigrant bill

This ugly incident is not an isolated one. It happened the same day that a thoroughly racist, anti-immigrant bill, House Bill 488, was passed by the Mississippi State House. This bill gives local and state police unlimited authority to demand immigration papers from anyone they detain or arrest for being “illegal.” The bill is very similar to one passed in Alabama last year that allows police to stop, frisk, detain and arrest any Brown



Angel Rodriguez at March 15 press conference.

or Black person at any time without any legal redress. To show his support for the bill, Mississippi Gov. Phil Bryant stated, “Perhaps it’s boat-rocking time in Mississippi.” (thinkprogress.org, March 2)

But Rep. Sonya Williams-Barnes, D-Gulfport, who is African American, said: “If we pass this bill, it will set Mississippi back 60 years.” (Fox News Latino, March 19) Passage of this bill can only deepen racist venom against immigrant workers, as seen by the USM band members’ response to Rodriguez.

Mississippi still flies the stars and bars of the Confederacy in its flag. It is the same state that fought to keep James Meredith from becoming the first African American admitted to the all-white University of Mississippi; he finally won that right in 1962. It is the same state where Civil Rights activists were assaulted, beaten and killed, most notably James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner in 1964. It is also one of the poorest, least unionized states.

Another important issue involved in this scandal is that Puerto Ricans are actually U.S. citizens, with the right to vote in U.S. elections. But the island’s commonwealth status is meant to disguise the

reality that Puerto Rico has been an outright colony of the U.S. since the Spanish-American War of 1898. Rick Santorum, who just won the Republican primary in Mississippi, commented that Puerto Rico should only be granted statehood if the population spoke English — ad nauseam.

Its indigenous economy has all but been decimated by U.S. markets. Between the 1930s and 1970s, an estimated one-third of Puerto Rican women were involuntarily sterilized by the U.S. health care system as a birth control method.

The U.S. Navy did irreparable damage to the environment there until its base on the island of Vieques was permanently shut down in 2003 due to protests. The fact that the USM band members assumed that Rodriguez was from Mexico — a main target of the anti-immigration legislation — exposes a deep level of historical backwardness.

The NCAA has tolerated other forms of racism at games, such as racist mascots and chants that degraded Indigenous culture by fans at Florida State and the University of Illinois. □



Protest of ‘Work It’ works

ABC television has pulled the situation comedy “Work It” from its lineup after only two shows and after the organization Boricuas for a Positive Image announced a demonstration, pictured here, against ABC and Disney. One of the key lines in an early show insulted Puerto Ricans by linking them with the illegal narcotics business. The demonstrators said that pulling the show is not enough. They

demanding an apology and to meet with ABC executives to prevent such insults from occurring again, or they would keep protesting. They followed through with two protests in New York on March 15 — one outside ABC offices on 66th Street and Columbus Avenue and one in front of the Disney store at 47th Street and Seventh Avenue.

— Report & photo by John Catalinotto

Operation Zip Code:

Postal Service is not for sale!

By Joe Piette
New York

“We need jobs! We need mail! The Postal Service is not for sale!” chanted hundreds of postal workers and community activists as they marched from Union Square to New York City’s historic main post office on March 17.

Organized by Community-Labor United to Save Postal Jobs and Services, mail carriers, clerks, drivers and mail handlers came from Baltimore to Bangor, Maine, and even from Canada to join with New Yorkers in demonstrating their opposition to the threatened privatization of the U.S. Postal Service.

Community members from the Chelsea Coalition on Housing, Picture the Homeless, the National Action Network Youth Movement, the South Bronx Community Congress and La Peña del Bronx joined postal workers in opposing the closing of their neighborhood post offices and the negative effects this will have on their communities.

The crowd stopped midway along their 20-block march route to say “Hell, no!” to the closing of the Old Chelsea Station on West 18th Street.

Clarice Torrence, president of the New York Metro Area American Postal Workers Union, and Charlie Heege, president of New York Branch 36 of the National Association of Letter Carriers, later addressed the crowd in front of the James A. Farley Post Office, where a historic postal strike had begun exactly 42 years earlier.

Postal workers from Maine, Maryland and Pennsylvania spoke, as did Mike Palecek, representing the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. Chris Silvera of Teamsters Local 808, Eddie Yood of Commu-



WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

communications Workers Local 1180 and Charles Jenkins of Transport Workers Local 100 also expressed their solidarity.

Postal managers, Congress behind cutbacks

More than 200,000 postal positions have been eliminated since 1999. Now another 200,000 jobs, 3,700 post offices and 223 mail processing plants are on the chopping block if Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe has his way.

The new cuts are different from those in the past. Until now, mail delivery mandates have not been affected. These new cutbacks, however, would eviscerate mail delivery standards, increasing the length

of time required to deliver first class mail from overnight to two or three days within most urban areas and longer in rural areas and over long distances.

In effect, these cutbacks would be a giant step to privatization, providing a rationale for private competitors to take over valuable postal business with the promise that they would “provide better mail service.”

The drastic measures being taken by postal management are being driven by a 2006 law that forces the U.S.P.S. to pay \$5.5 billion per year for retiree health care benefits — 75 years in advance! It's a burden that no other private business or government agency is required to pay.

Heege pointed out at the rally that “in the first quarter of their fiscal year, 2012, they had a \$200 million profit. That profit came from ordering purchases online, which increased 7 percent from last year.”

President Fredric V. Rolando of the National Association of Letter Carriers has said that without the unnecessary burden of the mandated advance payments toward retiree benefits, “the Postal Service would be profitable most years, and in fact would have netted a \$4.6 billion profit from 2006 to 2009.” (usatoday.com, Nov. 12, 2010)

Operation Zip Code members plan more activities on March 31 and April 6, as well as participation in the New York May Day march. □

In another midnight deal

NY State cuts public pensions

By G. Dunkel
New York

It was the classic New York State backroom deal. In a session starting late at night on March 14, the State Legislature cut pensions for public employees not already covered, mainly new hires. The body also redrew election district lines required by the 2010 census and expanded the DNA archives to force anyone convicted of a misdemeanor to provide a DNA sample.

The final vote didn't take place until 7:30 a.m. the next morning. Legislators didn't have a chance to read the bill before voting to pass it.

New York — which sets its pensions by legislation, not by collective bargaining — joined 43 other states that have cut public pensions since 2009, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). New York's constitution divides public pensions into different groups called tiers; each new tier is worse than the preceding one.

The union movement was very angry about this attack — especially since some of the lawmakers they had helped elect passed it. Most of the Democratic members of the Senate walked out in a vain attempt to deny a quorum. However, in the Assembly, where Democrats have a majority, the vote was 93 in favor to 45 opposed.

'Requiring 99% to pay for sins of 1%'

Lillian Roberts, executive director of American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees DC 37 — which represents 120,000 city workers — issued a strong statement as the pension bill went to a vote. She said, “Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s proposed Tier 6 is an outrageously inadequate plan that would cut members’ lifetime retirement benefits by 40 percent, while it conceals a time bomb that could cut benefits and even destroy the pension system for current workers and retirees in all tiers, as well as newcomers.

“Tier 6 is actually a sneaky way to privatize the state and city pension systems — modeled on George W. Bush’s defeated plan to privatize Social Security. It would funnel huge profits to the bankers who sent our economy into recession and leave retirees at the mercy of the stock market.”

Richard Ianuzzi, president of New York State United Teachers — the largest union in the state, which represents 600,000 workers — called on the state government to make a better choice: close corporate tax loopholes to bring in billions of dollars to invest in jobs and education. He also called for legislation to recoup from Wall Street the \$100 billion in pension losses stemming from abuses that crashed the state's economy in 2008.

“It is very simple: Those who chose this path are requiring the 99% to pay for the

sins of the 1%," Ianuzzi said.

Danny Donohue, president of the Civil Service Employees Association, the largest union of state employees, said: "This deal is about politicians standing with the 1% — the wealthiest New Yorkers — to give them a better break while telling nurses, bus drivers, teachers, secretaries and laborers to put up and shut up."

The NCSL says that pensions in most states are termed “defined benefits,” in which each pensioner gets a fixed amount of money per month. Most private pensions are “defined contributions,” a fixed amount of money allotted to invest with a bank or a brokerage firm.

Even though pensions are part of employee wages, held until retirement from working full-time, many states only funded them as their employees retired, relying on small payments to investment funds to cover pension costs.

When the stock market tanked in 2008, so did the pension funds. This gave states the excuse to cut what they had promised and what their employees had earned.

While the details are preliminary, because union lawyers and staff haven't finished analyzing the pension bill, billionaire New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg estimates the city's "savings" to be \$21 billion over the next 30 years. The state's estimated "savings" range from \$30 billion to \$121 billion.

From the workers' perspective, city workers' wages will be cut by \$21 billion over 30 years, and state workers will see cuts ranging from \$30 billion to \$121 billion.

There are many obnoxious wrinkles in this pension bill: age of retirement, how to calculate overtime pay and so on. The one that will affect a large number of part-time higher education workers is vesting — how long workers have to be on the job before they qualify for pensions. Now it is 10 years, but under the new bill, it will be 20 years. That means that thousands of part-time teachers in the City University of New York and State University of New York systems will not get pensions.

The Center for Retirement Research at Boston College reports that nearly two-thirds of households will probably face declining living standards in retirement over the next 15 years. Attacks on workers' wages, disguised as attacks on their "too generous" pensions, only contribute to this problem.

The more productive capitalism becomes, the more workers lose their jobs and future security. It is this irrational system of private ownership of the economy that dooms older workers to poverty while the 1% amass ever more wealth. If the wealth created by the workers belonged to them collectively, there would be more than enough for all retirees to live in comfort. □

Majority African-American city fights state takeover

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, Pan-African News Wire
Detroit

A new round of political assaults has been launched against the people of Detroit with a threat by the state to impose a “consent agreement” on both the mayor and the City Council. Two drafts of such a document have been released to the public and sent to Mayor Dave Bing as well as the nine-member City Council.

The consent agreement leaked on March 13 mandates the creation of a parallel nine-member “Financial Advisory Board” (FAB), which would take over full operations of the administrative and decision-making capacity of elected city officials. This board, to be appointed by conservative Gov. Rick Snyder and totally unaccountable to the city’s existing elected representatives, is charged to enact draconian measures aimed at ensuring the full payment of usurious debt service to the financial institutions, under threat of default.

Other instruments of authority embodied in the FAB include the right to nullify labor and vendor contracts, the termination of workers and managers, the privatization of city services and the auctioning off of municipal assets. The \$6 billion in workers’ pension funds would be subject to seizure and “reinvestment,” along with the outright theft of deferred wages in the form of unused sick days and vacation time.

Detroit responds with anger & outrage

Word of the consent agreement surfaced the evening of March 12. This new

initiative on the part of Gov. Snyder immediately sparked widespread comment among city residents.

Debra Taylor, community activist and organizer for the group “We the People,” wrote on Facebook that the city’s acceptance of such an obligation would be tantamount to a return to “sharecropping.” On the following day, the Detroit City Council was flooded with requests for public comment.

Members and leaders of municipal unions and community organizations staunchly denounced the draft consent agreements. Attorney Jerome Goldberg, an organizer of the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions and Utility Shutoffs, said that the city government should go after the hundreds of millions of dollars owed to Detroit by the state.

City Councilwoman JoAnn Watson has consistently raised the failure of the state government to make good on a revenue-sharing agreement that, if paid, would provide more than \$550 million to Detroit. Addressing the City Council, Goldberg stressed that “it is the banks which have driven hundreds of thousands of people out of the city.” He noted that a moratorium on debt service payments to the financial institutions would provide much needed relief to this beleaguered city.

Even Mayor Bing, who was favored in the last election by the corporate community due to his business background, rejected the proposed consent agreement. Bing said he was handed the 21-page draft agreement by representatives of the gov-

ernor and told that he had one hour to sign it.

Bing told a crowd of hundreds of students and community people at Wayne County Community College Downtown on March 13: “Hell no, under no circumstances would I sign such an agreement. I was elected to work for the people of Detroit, not Gov. Snyder.”

Bing has been in negotiations with municipal unions for several months over “cost-cutting measures.” No agreement has been reached and no vote has taken place among rank-and-file members.

Ruling class vs. people’s opposition

The draft consent agreement is the response of the bankers and bosses to the months-long struggle of people in the city and around the state against Public Act 4, referred to as the “Emergency Manager Law.” This bill, passed one year ago by the State Legislature, usurps local authority in the interests of corporate power.

There has been widespread rejection of Public Act 4. Mass meetings and a statewide petition drive that collected 226,000 signatures are aimed at repealing the “dictator law.” A number of lawsuits have been filed on behalf of Michigan residents challenging its constitutionality.

The signing of a consent agreement mandating cuts and other austerity measures would be merely a cover for the eventual appointment of an emergency manager with total power to implement drastic political and economic policy without the involvement of the population, elected officials or unions.

If the petition signatures are ratified by

the secretary of state, that would nullify the existing law and lead to a ballot referendum in November. Immediately after ratification of the petition signatures, lawyers for opponents of Public Act 4 would seek an order removing all emergency managers who have already been imposed on the cities of Flint, Pontiac, Ecorse, Benton Harbor and possibly Inkster.

Contradictions within capitalist democracy

These maneuvers by the state government illustrate the contradictions within this bourgeois democratic system. Even though the threat of consent agreements and emergency management has been challenged in the courts and through state-approved petitions, the ruling class through its agents in Lansing, the state capital, are determined to thwart the will of the people.

The imposition of emergency management and consent agreements has nothing to do with improving the finances of distressed cities. These measures will not restore municipal jobs and salaries, public lighting, transportation, quality education and affordable housing, or protect worker pensions.

In fact, these are instruments of the ruling class designed to take back the concessions workers have gained through decades of struggle. This is why the people of Detroit have an inherent mistrust of such actions.

If the existing methods of resistance to the onslaught of austerity are overlooked and subverted by the surrogates of capital, new and more militant actions will come into being. □

‘Consent decree’ puts fox in charge of henhouse

By **Jerry Goldberg**
Detroit

Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder on March 12 proposed a “consent agreement” between the state and the city of Detroit for oversight of the city’s finances in place of the state imposing an emergency manager over the city. This “consent agreement,” just like the Emergency Manager Act, would guarantee that the banks have direct control over the city’s budget.

Article 11 of the consent agreement states: “This agreement shall remain in effect until (a) the earlier of (i) the end of the third consecutive fiscal year of the City in which ... (ii) the City has achieved and maintained for at least two calendar years a credit rating by two or more nationally recognized securities rating agencies ... on the City’s outstanding long-term unsubordinated debt in either of the two highest long-term rating categories of such rating agency.”

These “rating security agencies,” which will determine the city’s financial solvency, are for-profit corporations that earn their revenues through payments from the banks and ancillary institutions. By giving the financial institutions the ratings they want to hear, regardless of whether these ratings are justified, these agencies maximize their own revenues and profits.

A report by the U.S. Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations called “Wall Street and the Financial Crisis,” dated April 13, 2011, documented how, in their drive for profits in collusion with the banks, these agencies gave subprime and other exotic mortgage securities the high-

est ratings, despite knowing they were fraudulently created and doomed to fail.

The Senate report noted how analysts from Moody’s and Standard & Poor’s, two of the largest rating agencies, continued to give subprime mortgage securities the highest AAA rating during the years 2004 to 2007, despite knowing “of increased credit risks due to mortgage fraud, law underwriting standards, and unsustainable housing price appreciation.” The reason? “Competitive pressures, including the drive for market share and need to accommodate investment bankers bringing in business, affected the credit ratings issued by Moody’s and S&P.”

Detroit was the city hardest hit by the predatory lending practices endorsed by these rating agencies. Approximately 85 percent of the city’s mortgage loans were subprime, leading to 150,000 foreclosures between 2005 and 2010, loss of one-quarter of the city’s population, and leveling of the city’s tax base.

Halt debt payments to banks!

If the consent decree is implemented, these rating agencies will be in position to ensure that the same banks — the ones they collaborated with in destroying Detroit with their criminal foreclosures — will continue to get first lien on the city’s tax dollars.

A 2011 Ernst & Young report on the city’s finances noted that for the current fiscal year, Detroit will pay \$226.3 million to the banks for debt service out of its general fund and an additional \$399.3 million in debt service from the water, transportation and parking departments. By holding the power to extend the con-

sent decree indefinitely, the ratings agencies can ensure that their sponsors, the criminal banks, get full payment on the debt service, even if it means city services are destroyed, city workers are laid off, and the city’s assets are privatized.

This is consistent with Public Act 4, the Emergency Manager Act, which guarantees the banks “payment in full of the scheduled debt service requirements on all bonds, notes and municipal securities.”

Rather than going along with the governor’s consent agreement or with the imposition of an emergency financial manager on behalf of the banks, Detroit

Mayor Dave Bing and the City Council should declare a moratorium — a halt — on all debt service payments to the banks.

A suspension in debt service payments would immediately resolve the city’s fiscal crisis and allow for restoration of city services and recall of laid-off city workers. It would give time for the city to go after the banks to repay the billions they have stolen from the people through their fraudulent lending practices.

Goldberg is an organizer of the upcoming National Conference for a Moratorium on Foreclosures and Evictions to take place March 31 in Detroit.

All activists are invited to a conference demanding:

2-year National Moratorium on Foreclosures

Sat • March 31 • Detroit

Central United Methodist Church • 2nd Floor

23 E. Adams St. (at Woodward Ave.)

Registration: 8-9 am • Conference: 9 am – 6 pm

The Moratorium Now! Coalition, which has been raising the demand for a moratorium on foreclosures and challenging foreclosures and evictions in Michigan for the past five years, invites all activists to come to Detroit—the city hit hardest by the economic war on the 99%—for a one day conference on March 31, 2012. The conference will be an opportunity to share our experiences fighting foreclosures and evictions through direct actions. We will share legal strategies in challenging the banks in federal and state courts. And we will plan a campaign to raise and win the demand for a National Two Year Moratorium on Foreclosures and Foreclosure-Related evictions.



OCCUPYOURHOMES.ORG

Sponsored by: **Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions & Utility Shutoffs**
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moratorium-mi.org

U.S.-backed war in Somalia runs into stiff resistance

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

A major battle outside the Somalian central city of Baidoa on March 10 showed that the imperialist-backed war against Al-Shabaab is far from over. Reports in recent weeks in the corporate media had made it appear that the Islamic resistance forces were in retreat and suffering massive casualties at the hands of the multinational invasion forces currently operating inside Somalia.

Developments in the Horn of Africa must be viewed within the context of the expansion of the United States Africa Command — known as AFRICOM — and NATO operations on the continent. The reserves of oil and strategic minerals that are increasingly identified in Africa are at the root of these military operations in Somalia.

There is intense fighting in Mogadishu, Somalia's capital, in Kismayo in the south, and in Baidoa in the central region where Western-engineered militaries claim to have largely weakened the Al-Shabaab movement. Nonetheless, reports say the March 12 Baidoa clashes killed 70 Ethiopian troops and wounded many more.

In Mogadishu on March 14, an attack on the presidential palace killed several people. Al-Shabaab soon claimed responsibility for the operation, saying that the bombing attack killed 17 people.

Sheikh Abdiasis Abu Musab of Al-Shabaab said in a statement, "What a victory, inside the so-called presidential palace; more explosions and bombers will follow." (Reuters, March 14)

The Ethiopian military's incursion once again into Somalia is key to efforts to defeat Al-Shabaab through overwhelming force. Kenyan Defense Forces, which entered Somalia in October 2011, quickly became stalled due to Al-Shabaab's determined defense and inclement weather conditions in the region.

Soon enough it was announced that the Kenyan military would be integrated into the project of the African Union Mission to Somalia. AMISOM, which has been operating in Somalia since 2007, was a direct response to Ethiopia's earlier failure. In late 2006 Washington had encouraged the Ethiopian military to intervene there.

The Ethiopian occupation was met by fierce opposition from the Islamic Courts Union, which at the time was designated by the Bush administration as a threat to U.S. interests in the Horn of Africa.

Ethiopia's intervention, which lasted from December 2006 to early 2009, prompted large-scale dislocation of the Somali population. Besides all the ground intervention, Washington carried out several bombing operations in Somalia during 2007 under the guise of targeting "al Qaeda terrorist bases" inside this Horn of Africa nation.

Despite the large-scale Ethiopian intervention and the role of U.S. and British air power, Ethiopia's invasion and occupation were huge failures. Politically, however, the U.S. was able to split the Islamic Courts Union coalition and bring the more moderate elements into the Washington-backed Transitional Federal Government.

However, the more youthful militant wing of the ICU known as Al-Shabaab

rejected the agreement to enter the TFG. Al-Shabaab also rejected the demand that AMISOM military forces be allowed to remain in Somalia indefinitely.

AMISOM was initially set up to deploy approximately 8,000 troops from the U.S.-funded regimes in Uganda and Burundi, as well other states. Since late 2011, reinforcements have been dispatched from Djibouti, a neighboring state which harbors a Pentagon and French military base at Camp Lemonnier near the Somali border.

Behind the attacks on Eritrea

On March 15, the Ethiopian military launched attacks across its northern border into Eritrea. This rekindled the long conflict over the independence of Eritrea which had been incorporated into Ethiopia between 1952 and 1961.

Following Ethiopia's massive 1974 revolution, the Dergue headed by Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam turned toward the Soviet Union and Cuba for assistance and declared the new political dispensation socialist oriented.

The revolutionary Ethiopian government closed a U.S. military base and enacted social reforms, including land redistribution. Nonetheless, the war with Eritrea, a former Italian colony and British protectorate, continued.

During the period of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, several months prior to its break-up, the government led by the Workers Party of Ethiopia was overthrown. At that time Eritrea, under the leadership of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, declared its independence from Ethiopia with no apparent opposi-

tion from Addis Ababa.

However, by 1998 a protracted military struggle started up once again between Ethiopia and Eritrea, in which a reported 70,000 people were killed between 1998 and 2000. The Organization of African Unity — predecessor to the African Union — brokered an agreement in Algiers that resulted in the cessation of hostilities. No peace treaty has been signed between the two states.

Responding to Ethiopia's March 15 attack, the Eritrean government said that the military strike is designed to further obscure Addis Ababa's ongoing occupation of territory around Badme, which is on the border between the two countries. The U.S. and Ethiopia have accused Eritrea of supplying military assistance to Al-Shabaab and other movements in the Afars region that oppose the Ethiopian regime. Eritrea denies these claims.

Imperialist aims in the Horn of Africa

U.S. imperialism and its allies aim to isolate and liquidate all political forces within the Horn of Africa that operate independently of Washington's direction. This was the rationale for the U.S. urging Ethiopian intervention into Somalia between 2006 and 2009 and the latest incursions around Baidoa.

In all likelihood, the recent Ethiopian strikes against Eritrea are allowed by the imperialists because Eritrea has resisted cooperation with imperialism's regional efforts geared toward subduing Somalia.

Somalia has recently been discovered to possess a potential source of oil for the transnational petroleum firms. Drilling has already begun in the northern break-away enclave of Puntland.

U.S. drones are in full operation in Somalia, and have led to the deaths of hundreds of civilians inside the country over the last several months. At the same time, flotillas of warships from Washington and the European Union are patrolling waterways off the coast in the Gulf of Aden, which are some of the most lucrative shipping lanes in the world.

Fresh from the overthrow of Col. Moammar Gadhafi's government in Libya, the U.S. and NATO are seeking greater avenues of penetration into Africa. Consequently, anti-war and anti-imperialists forces in the U.S. must oppose these operations because they are only structured to increase the profit margins of the transnational corporations and the banks. □

Solidarity with Palestine



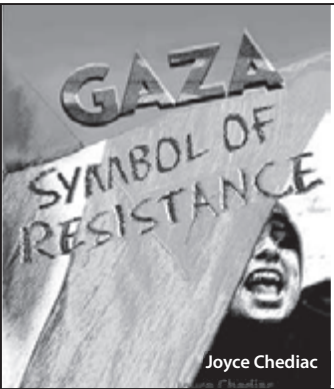
Occupy Oakland held a rally, march and community forum on March 13, the third anniversary of Tristan Anderson's critical injury at the hands of Israeli border police in the West Bank village of Nil'in. Anderson is a long-time Oakland activist who was hit in the head by a high-velocity tear gas grenade fired by Israeli troops. The in-

jury left him paralyzed on his left side. His parents are pursuing a civil suit in Israel against the Israeli military, who have denied responsibility for his injuries.

Some 50 people braved pouring rain to attend the rally in solidarity with Anderson and Palestine. Later a panel discussion and feast, attended by about 100

people, was held at the Islamic Cultural Center of Northern California. Speakers included a Palestinian youth from the town of Nil'in where Tristan was wounded. Speakers expressed solidarity with Palestine and anger at the recent attacks in Gaza.

— Report & photo by Terri Kay



GAZA: Symbol of Resistance

A book of articles from WW, edited by Joyce Chediak

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By Deirdre Griswold

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The ouster of Bo A critical moment in China

By Fred Goldstein

It is now world news that Bo Xilai, a high-ranking member of the 25-member Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party, has been removed from his key post as Party Secretary of the important Chongqing branch of the CCP.

This move comes as the CCP is preparing to choose a new leadership this fall. Bo had been widely regarded as a clear candidate for the nine-member standing committee of the Politburo. That is now out. This is the first open breach in the Chinese CCP leadership in two decades.

Bo was known for trying to revive the culture of Mao Zedong through many public programs. He emphasized state intervention in the economy and advocated planning for massive low-income housing projects for migrant workers and others, as well as fighting to reduce inequality in general.

Bo has also been known for a fierce anti-corruption campaign in which the masses were encouraged to point out corrupt officials and gangsters. Several thousand people were arrested, among them business people, and many were sent to jail. The highest police official in Chongqing was executed during the anti-corruption campaign.

Bo was removed after an incident in which the subsequent police chief of Chongqing, Wang Lijun, who worked with Bo in a widely celebrated anti-corruption campaign, fled Chongqing on Feb. 6 to the U.S. Consulate in the nearby city of Chengdu and asked for political asylum.

According to Chinese government and party sources, Wang claimed to have documents incriminating Bo. Wang was taken from the consulate, and is now being held in Beijing.

There has been much speculation about Bo and Wang and what happened. Much has been alleged about Bo's flamboyant personal style, his ambition, a factional struggle within the leadership for position and so on. Perhaps all these factors played some role in his ouster.

But one thing is clear. The imperialists have all taken a position against Bo, and are overjoyed to see his downfall.

To be sure, there is no evidence that Bo was trying to abandon the reliance on capitalism in China's development that followed the death of Mao. On the contrary, his outlook is fully within the general framework of using capitalism and foreign investment to grow the economy in Chongqing. But within that framework, he emphasized the so-called "third hand," the need for the state to play a significant role in the economy, to ensure the well-

being of the masses and to reduce inequality as a matter of priority.

Effect of global capitalist crisis

It is important to put this struggle in the broader context of the global capitalist crisis and its effect on the Chinese economy and on the political and factional struggle inside China.

The economic crisis in the capitalist world has undermined in a very fundamental way the argument that China should bank its fate and future on capitalist development and the capitalist world market as a foundational strategy.

The collapse in 2007-2009 of the world capitalist financial system and the global market, the ensuing mass unemployment, the wild speculation, the overproduction, the economic dislocation, the flood of bankruptcies, the gyrations of the stock markets and the continuing threats on the horizon must haunt all of China's leaders and give ammunition to all those who oppose the further unleashing of capitalism in China.

The imperialists and the more pro-capitalist forces in the CCP and the state know this. So they have rushed to fortify their position in the face of the monumental evidence of the failure of capitalism and its dangerous effects in China during 2008 and 2009.

They made their moves just as China's legislative body was preparing to consider and approve various plans and when the subject of future leadership was under private discussion.

It is significant that the World Bank presented a 448-page document just in time for the 18th National People's Congress last month, entitled "China 2030." What makes the public presentation of this document so ominous is that it was co-authored by the Development Research Center of the State Council, the top executive body in China. Liu He, who worked on the document and who meets regularly with U.S. officials, is an adviser to the standing committee of the Politburo who has argued publicly that foreign pressure should be used to push capitalist reforms in China.

To underscore the collaborative nature of the document, the subtitle is "Building a Modern, Harmonious, and Creative High-Income Society." The term "Harmonious Society" is the slogan of China's present leaders, President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao.

The world was treated to a video circulated online in February that showed Du Jianguo, editor of an environmental magazine in China, disrupting a press conference by World Bank President Rob-

ert Zoellick as Zoellick was unveiling his document. In front of the world press, Du stood up and denounced the document as "unconstitutional," saying it would "subvert the basic economic system of socialism." Before he was pushed off the platform by security, Du called the bankers' document "poison" aimed at capturing China's markets for international capitalists. (Wall Street Journal, Feb. 23)

World Bank's attempt to promote counterrevolution

This document is part of the background to the factional struggle in China. It represents a firmer and more dangerous nexus between imperialism and the so-called "reform" faction, the more aggressive pro-capitalist faction, in China.

The Executive Summary of the document reads:

"First, implement structural reforms to strengthen the foundations for a market based economy by redefining the role of government, reforming and restructuring state enterprises and banks, developing the private sector, promoting competition, and deepening reforms in the land, labor, and financial markets. As an economy approaches the technology frontier and exhausts the potential for acquiring and applying technology from abroad, the role of government and its relationship to markets and the private sector needs to change fundamentally. While providing relatively fewer 'tangible' public goods and services directly, the government will need to provide more intangible public goods and services like systems, rules, and policies, which increase production efficiency, promote competition, facilitate specialization, enhance the efficiency of resource allocation, protect the environment, and reduce risks and uncertainties.

"In the enterprise sector, the focus will need to be further reforms of state enterprises (including measures to recalibrate the role of public resources, introduce modern corporate governance practices including separating ownership from management, and implement gradual ownership diversification where necessary), private sector development and fewer barriers to entry and exit, and increased competition in all sectors, including in strategic and pillar industries. In the financial sector, it would require commercializing the banking system, gradually allowing interest rates to be set by market forces, deepening the capital market, and developing the legal and supervisory infrastructure to ensure financial stability and build the credible foundations for the internationalization of China's financial sector."

In other words, the World Bank, with the collaboration of the Development Research Center of the State Council, is recommending that state enterprises be reduced to dispensers of state services and advice, withdraw from the production

of infrastructure, steel, energy and other "tangible goods," and leave that to private capitalists. They further recommend that the banking system be integrated with world imperialist finance capital and that state planning be reduced to a nullity.

In short, they advocate the destruction of the very socialist structures that hold Chinese society together and that have enabled it to withstand the most severe capitalist crisis since World War II.

For a representative of the highest state body to help draft such a counterrevolutionary document, publicly associate his name with it and urge its adoption shows the degeneration of key sections of the highest leadership and, within the broader state apparatus, highlights the pernicious influence of unleashed capitalism in China.

This explains the urgent disruption of Zoellick's press conference and the push-back that is coming from various quarters in China. This is not to say that the viewpoint represented by the World Bank document will be victorious. There are many forces in China, including the workers and peasants, who would strongly resist any attempt to fully implement this program.

Christine LaGarde, head of the International Monetary Fund, also chose the moment of the National People's Congress to issue a statement in high praise of China's economy. This was undoubtedly coordinated with the World Bank presentation of "China 2030."

The severity of the struggle over the future of China also broke out in the open at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in January.

"A group of Chinese speakers warned in stringent tones on Friday morning [Jan. 27] in Davos that the country's free-market reform is stalled, and China is sliding backwards towards greater state control of the economy.

"Hu Shuli, editor of Caixin Magazine and widely recognized leader of China's 'reform' faction, launched a breakfast forum by identifying delayed economic reform as one of the two key risks for the Chinese economy going forward, alongside the weakening exports in the wake of the euro-zone crisis." (Wall Street Journal, Jan. 27) Other Chinese participants agreed.

The world capitalist crisis has brought this struggle on at a crucial time of change in the Chinese leadership. The ouster and public humiliation of Bo, which brought this struggle to light, can best be understood in terms of a struggle over dangerously deepening capitalist reforms. With or without Bo, this serious struggle will continue.

For those who believe that there has been a complete restoration of capitalism in China, this whole matter may seem to be of little importance. But to the workers and peasants of China and to the rest of the world, the question of stopping the further advance of the counterrevolution is of supreme importance.

To be continued.

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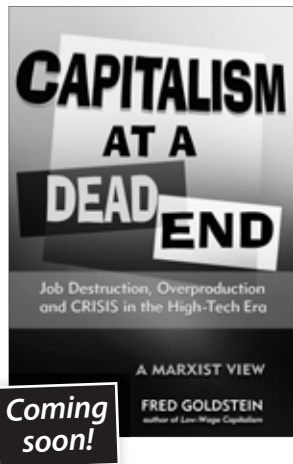
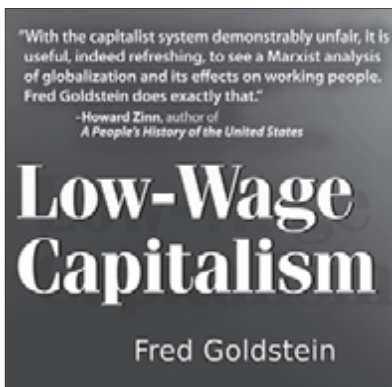
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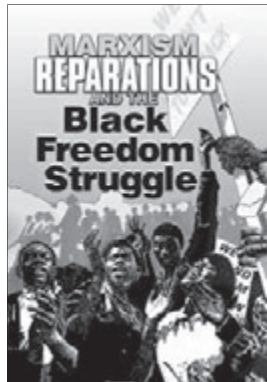
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GRAPHIC: SAHU BARRON

Stop the war on African-American youth!

Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old African-American youth, was shot in the chest and killed at point-blank range by a vigilante on Feb. 26 in Sanford, Fla. Martin was unarmed as he was returning from a store when his young life was tragically cut short. The man who shot him, George Zimmerman — who lived in a gated community — has not been arrested as of this writing.

The 911 tapes of the exchange between the two, including the shot that killed Martin, have been released to the public. On these tapes, Martin can be heard pleading for his life before Zimmerman pulls the trigger.

In 2005, Florida passed the “Stand Your Ground” law, which allows citizens to use deadly force if they “feel” threatened with injury or death, which Zimmerman has used to claim “self-defense.” But other evidence has come forth disproving Zimmerman’s claim that he shot Martin in self-defense, along with the fact that on the 911 call, he was asked not to pursue the teenager.

The fact that the Sanford Police Department has not arrested Zimmerman, almost a month after the shooting, has outraged millions of people around the U.S. and the world. If Martin had been the shooter, the odds of him being arrested immediately would have been overwhelming. The Sanford police have already been cited for not arresting anyone who assaults Black people. It is this known history, along with the “Stand Your Ground” law, that gave Zimmerman the green light to kill Martin. ABC News reported that Martin was subjected to a racial slur by Zimmerman before he was killed.

A petition demanding Zimmerman’s arrest has garnered 600,000 signatures, as more continue to sign it. Thousands of tweets from the U.S. and worldwide are pouring in demanding justice for Trayvon Martin. These tweets include famous celebrities such as Don Cheadle, Rosanne Barr, Taraji P. Henson, John Legend, Immortal Technique, Russell Simmons and more. This social media phenomenon forced the U.S. Justice Department to announce on March 19 that it would open an “investigation” into the shooting. And a grand jury in Florida will supposedly make a ruling next month on this case.

Impunity for repression

Trayvon Martin joins the already countless list of young African-American men who have lost their lives for no other reasons than being young, male and a person of color. And in Martin’s particular case, he had his life stolen from him walking while Black, wearing a hoodie

and carrying a bag of Skittles, as many tweets indicate.

Whether it’s murder by a police officer or a vigilante’s bullet, a bloody war on African-American youth is deepening by leaps and bounds as the capitalist economic crisis becomes more permanent and insoluble. This war is rooted within a brutal U.S. capitalist system built on the foundation of slavery and all forms of racist Jim Crow. This is a system that in general gives a blank check to its repressive apparatus — the police — to racially profile Black, Latino/a and Native youth in disproportionate numbers with impunity.

This is a system that has systematically disenfranchised millions of young Black men from getting decent-paying jobs, education and health care if they suffer from drug addiction; as a consequence, their numbers are swelling the prisons. The only work they do find is in prison, where they are forced to work for slave wages averaging a dollar or less an hour.

And if they are released from prison, they are demonized, denied access to jobs and stigmatized for life for being a “former felon.” They are also denied the right to political representation. For instance, more than 1.4 million African-American men will be denied the right to vote in the 2012 presidential election due to past felony convictions. Florida is home to many of these former felons, relegating it to a modern-day plantation.

Since 2008 and the election of Barack Obama as the first African-American president, the big business pundits have described the U.S. as a “post-racial” society. Nothing could be further from the truth. If anything, there is even more racism today as many of the progressive gains won by mass struggles, starting in the 1930s with the building of unions through the 1960s with the upsurge of the Black Liberation movement, have been decimated.

Protests calling for justice for Trayvon Martin are being called around the country, including a “A Million Hoodies March for Trayvon Martin” in New York on March 21 in Union Square, where Occupy Wall Street activists have been removed by police.

This latest atrocity in Florida offers an important reminder: Youth in the Black, Latino/a and other oppressed communities have an objective, common interest with many white youth involved in the OWS movement. Capitalism does not offer them any hope for a bright, productive future. OWS’s solidarity with youth of color who are daily under the gun is crucial in forging class unity against all of capitalism’s evils, especially racism. □

Massacre in Afghanistan

Pentagon scrambles to elude blame

By Gene Clancy

On the morning of March 11, Abdul Samad returned to his home after visiting a nearby village in Kandahar, Afghanistan, to find a horrific scene. Sixteen villagers, most of them women and children, had been murdered by U.S./NATO personnel. The Pentagon says one U.S. soldier went berserk. However, Afghan authorities say as many as 20 soldiers could have been involved.

Samad lost four daughters between the ages of two and six and four sons between the ages of eight and 12. The victims had been shot, stabbed and partially burned. The perpetrator(s) had presumably walked about a mile from a nearby U.S. military base and methodically gone door to door in two separate villages, killing as he/they went. Of the 16 dead, nine were children and three were women. Five more people were seriously injured.

This is not the first time these villagers were attacked by NATO forces. New York Times reporter Graham Bowley reported from the scene shortly after the massacre:

“During the surge in 2009, the coalition forces swept through this area and destroyed many of the villages. ... [Displaced residents] didn’t want to come back, but they were drawn back under the urging of the Afghan government. ... Abdul Samad and other people came back to this town. ... It was only just over a mile from the camp where the American soldier was stationed. And he thought it was going to be safe.” (Democracy Now transcript, March 14)

“Our government told us to come back to the village,” said Samad, “and then they let the Americans kill us.”

On March 17, U.S. officials released the name of the person they claim was the sole shooter, Sgt. Robert Bales — but only after they had spirited him out of Afghanistan and deposited him in Fort Leavenworth, Kan. His spouse and family in the United States were also seized and taken to a military base “for their own safety.”

There has been a great deal of discussion about Bales and his possible motives. Depending on the source, he has been portrayed as suffering from post traumatic stress disorder, having personal financial problems, suffering from two injuries sustained in his three tours of duty in Iraq, as an upstanding decorated “patriot,” a fine family man and/or a depraved killer.

The attention paid to Bales seems to all add up to the same thing: an attempt to hermetically seal off the U.S. government and the Pentagon from absolutely any responsibility for the massacre. At the same time, the U.S. occupiers of Afghanistan are refusing to allow any hint of Afghan sovereignty over the case, even from the puppet government there.

When President Hamid Karzai suggested that because of the incident the pullout of U.S. troops should be accelerated to next year, he quickly received a phone call from President Barack Obama, who reaffirmed the 2014 target date for withdrawal. (New York Times, March 17)

Some parts of the Afghan government are disputing the U.S. theory of “a lone, crazed killer.” An Afghan parliamentary probe team said on March 15 that up to 20 U.S. troops were involved in the massacre.

The team spent two days in the prov-

ince, interviewing the bereaved families, tribal elders and survivors and collecting evidence at the site in Panjwai district.

Team member Hamizai Lali said, “We closely examined the site of the incident, talked to the families who lost their beloved ones, the injured people and tribal elders.” (Pajwok Afghan News, March 15) He added that the attack lasted one hour in the middle of the night and involved two groups of U.S. soldiers.

“The villages are one and a half kilometers from the American military base. We are convinced that one soldier cannot kill so many people in two villages within one hour at the same time, and the 16 civilians, most of them children and women, have been killed by the two groups.”

Most Afghans, including the puppet government, have called for Bales to be tried in Afghanistan. The U.S., of course, does not even consider this as a possibility. Ever since the middle of the 19th century, legal immunity for the nationals of an occupying force, known as extraterritoriality, has been a hallmark of colonialism and imperialism.

It also exposes the lie that the U.S. is in Afghanistan to help the Afghan people.

Ever since the massacre, U.S. officials have been working overtime to control the damage to their war policy, with the usual complicity of the corporate media. Indeed, the main concern of the media has been not for the victims but rather about the effect that the incident may have on the U.S. image.

They may have reason to worry. Sixty-one percent of people in the U.S. surveyed in a March 12-13 online poll by Reuters/Ipsos said the U.S. troops in Afghanistan should be brought home immediately. Forty percent said the killings in Afghanistan had weakened their support for the war. (Reuters, March 14) Across the U.S. there have been numerous demonstrations calling for an end to the war.

Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta attempted to pass off the gruesome event as just part of the “horrors of war.”

“War is hell. These kinds of events and incidents are going to take place, they’ve taken place in any war. They’re terrible events. And this is not the first of those events, and it probably won’t be the last,” said Panetta. “I do not believe that there is any reason at this point to make any changes with regards to our strategy and for the process of drawing down.” (Reuters, March 13)

Contrast this with the treatment by the Pentagon of Pfc. Bradley Manning, who is accused of, among other things, releasing documents and videos showing U.S. war crimes in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Manning was kept in solitary confinement for a year, stripped naked and chained to his bunk. Still behind bars, he faces a sentence of life imprisonment.

Demonstrators in Afghanistan were not buying the secretary’s ominous pronouncement.

Dadullah Khan, a student, made it very clear: “We don’t want any strategic partnership with the foreign troops. Afghans are independent people. We want to live independently, and we don’t want to live under any country’s colonization. So, once again, we condemn the Kandahar incident with the strongest words and urge the authorities to put the criminal to trial.” (Democracy Now transcript, March 14) □



See protest article on the facing page

WW
PHOTO:
BRYAN G.
PFEIFER

U.S. plots takeover of Syria and Iran

Continued from page 1

and the Pentagon’s goal is to smash all forms of self-determination and yearnings for democracy, economic freedom and independence. They want to return the Middle East to the period before the Soviet Union was a counterweight to imperialism, when the Western capitalists stole the natural resources at will and even set the national borders of the countries there.

According to some sources, U.S./NATO forces are already on the ground in Syria. Ex-CIA agent Philip Giraldi writes that the fighters opposing the government in Syria receive training, logistics assistance, intelligence and military supplies from NATO members and/or Gulf emirates (Global Research, Feb. 4).

WikiLeaks: U.S.-NATO troops in Syria

A confidential e-mail from an analyst in the intelligence firm Stratfor, released by WikiLeaks, said that “U.S.-led NATO troops are already on the ground in Syria training armed gangs,” according to the March 7 Reel News. “SOF [special operation forces] teams are already on the ground, focused on recce [reconnaissance] missions and training opposition forces,” according to the analyst. He continued, “[T]he idea ‘hypothetically’ is to commit guerrilla attacks, assassination campaigns to overthrow the Assad government.”

Assassins and internal guerrilla attacks don’t quite mesh with the White House’s claims of wanting to save Syrian lives.

U.S. Sen. John McCain, head of the powerful Senate Arms Services Commit-

tee, has openly called for air bombardments of Syria. Joint Chiefs Chair Gen. Martin Dempsey and Defense Secretary Leon Panetta openly discuss an attack on Syria. The question they raise is not whether to do it, but how to go about it.

Economic war on Syria continues with the goal of destabilizing the country from within. Due to international sanctions, the value of the Syrian pound has dropped by 50 percent against the dollar in a year. As of January, necessities cost as much as three times what they cost a year ago.

Iran’s financial sovereignty dealt a body blow

At the same time, the imperialists struck a body blow against the Islamic Republic of Iran’s financial sovereignty. On March 15, SWIFT, a powerful global bank consortium, expelled up to 30 Iranian banks, including Iran’s Central Bank. Iran had used the bank network to get payments for its oil exports and other exports.

The bank consortium’s chief executive, Lázaro Campos, call the move “extraordinary and unprecedented,” as SWIFT had never before disconnected banks. This lockout disrupts Iran’s ability to do international business and isolates it from the world economy.

Due to sanctions and threats to those who would trade with Iran, Iran’s currency, the rial, has lost 60 percent against the dollar in a year. Some businesses in Iran are dealing only in dollars.

The day before SWIFT’s action, U.S. President Obama and British Prime Minister David Cameron stood side by side at

the White House while Obama threatened Iran: “The window for solving [the nuclear] issue diplomatically is shrinking.” (Washington Post, March 15)

Meanwhile, Joint Chiefs Chair Gen. Dempsey said several times that the U.S. is prepared to attack Iran.

Intelligence agencies widely agree that Iran has no nuclear weapons. The nuclear threat in the Middle East comes from Israel, which has 300 nuclear warheads and has refused to sign the nuclear nonproliferation treaty, which Iran has. Yet Western powers have issued no call for international sanctions against Israel. In fact, the Pentagon covertly armed Israel with its nuclear weapons.

Coinciding with a recent trip of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Washington, the corporate media have been full of speculation on whether Israel would stage a strike on Iran’s nuclear facilities on its own.

There might be discord between the U.S. and Israel on where to draw the line on Iran’s nuclear program, as the U.S. has geopolitical concerns that Israel does not have. But there is no fundamental difference between Israeli and U.S. policy.

The U.S. likes to play the role of having to “restrain” Israel, and the mainstream media gladly play along. This diverts at-

tention from the fact that Israel does the U.S.’s bidding. But this is just role playing — Netanyahu’s role being to say, “Let’s bomb Iran now,” and Obama’s to say, “Let sanctions take their toll first.” Israel is the only reliable U.S. ally in the Middle East. Washington sees Israel as an unsinkable aircraft in the Pentagon’s fleet, not a homeland for Jewish people.

There has also been media speculation that Israel doesn’t have the weapons to bomb Iran’s deep underground facility. Responding to this, Israeli President Shimon Peres said during a visit to New York that security cooperation between the U.S. and Israel was “the best we’ve ever had.” (thinkingprogress.org, March 2)

Indicating the direction in which U.S. imperialism and Israel intend to go, right after Netanyahu left Washington Israel started bombing the Palestinian people of Gaza, using pilotless planes — drones.

Washington and Tel Aviv’s goal has always been to destroy all manifestations of the Palestinian struggle. Any time the imperialists push for a power shift in the Middle East, the Palestinians are the first casualty and suffer the most.

The background presented in this article is based on parts of a talk by Chediac to a March 16 Workers World Party forum in New York.

CUBAN 5, MUMIA

April actions to free political prisoners

Continued from page 3

will Occupy the Justice Department to demand his immediate freedom. For more information, go to millions4mumia.org.

In each of these cases millions believe the men to be innocent and improperly convicted. International outcry and relentless organizing forced Pennsylvania prosecutors to withdraw their attempt to execute Abu-Jamal. Though still imprisoned, he is no longer on death row or in solitary confinement.

The Cuban Five — Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González, Antonio Guerrero and René González — heroically penetrated and surveilled paramilitary elements in south Florida who have planned and executed bombing and other terrorist attacks against Cuba. Appeals by the government of Cuba to the U.S. government to act to stop the attacks were ignored. In contrast, admitted and convicted counterrevolutionary bombers like Luis Posada Carriles are feted in Miami today.

The Five were convicted after articles written by well-known journalists paid by the U.S. government inflamed anti-Cuba public opinion. René González was released from prison last Oct. 7, but has been forced to remain in Florida for an additional three years of supervised release. The U.S. denied entry visas for his spouse, Olga Salanueva, throughout his 13-year imprisonment and even after his release.

On March 19, after much public pressure, Miami trial judge Joan Lenard approved González’ request for temporary two-week travel to Cuba to visit his gravely ill brother Roberto. The other four remain unjustly imprisoned, including Gerardo Hernández, who is serving two life terms plus 15 years. In November 2002 Hernández’ mother died in Cuba. He could not attend her funeral and the U.S. government did not even suspend its constant refusal to grant entry visas to his spouse, Adriana Pérez, to visit him at that time of personal loss. □

U.S. massacre generates protests



WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

By Deirdre Griswold

Every day is a bad day for the people of Afghanistan, living under U.S. military occupation. But March 11 was a terrible day beyond description. That’s when an unknown number of U.S. soldiers entered villages near a U.S. base in Kandahar in the wee hours of the morning and massacred 16 people, most of them women and children.

The reaction around the world was at first numbness and then a surge of anger against the colonial war that had produced such a vile and cowardly attack.

In the United States, the International Action Center and Workers World Party went to Times Square in New York on March 15 to call for a U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. In Milwaukee, young people got out their “Stop genocide in Afghanistan” banners and took to the streets. In Detroit, a beleaguered city whose workers have been sucked dry by the auto companies and mortgage banks, passing buses, cabs and cars honked in sup-

port of a demonstration demanding “U.S. out of Afghanistan.”

Some 50 people demonstrated outside Obama campaign headquarters in Oakland, Calif. A vigil was held in Berkeley, Calif.

A huge protest in Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan demanded that the soldiers involved be tried in the country where they had committed these unspeakable crimes and shouted “Death to America!”

Other protests were held in Toronto, Canada, and Karachi, Pakistan. □



WW PHOTO: CHERYL LABASH

Continued from page 1

Michael Moore and Cornel West, who had addressed the Left Forum earlier in the evening, joined the crowd and gave words of support.

When the New York Police Department announced that the park was closed, several hundred youth sat down together, joining arms. They insisted on their right to stay there, citing a recent court ruling that required the park to remain open. When the police refused to listen, they chanted, “We are not afraid.”

Police pulled protesters out of the crowd and handcuffed them. They swung batons and pushed people to the ground. The media reported that police actions injured several people. These included shoving a woman’s head against the hood

of a car and pushing a man’s head into a plate glass window. Another woman suffered a seizure because of a forceful arrest, and then police denied her help from OWS emergency medical technicians. It took loud protests from the crowd to get an ambulance to the scene.

A youth who witnessed the police attack told Workers World, “All I could see was batons high in the air, coming down on people.” Some of the 73 people who were arrested reported being held, handcuffed and left on city buses for hours, before finally being taken to holding cells.

A march was called the following evening in support of the arrestees. At the closing panel of the Left Forum, speakers urged the audience to attend the march and support the arrested youth. □

LA LUCHA DE LAS MUJERES

Indignación frente a los ataques de la derecha

Por Kris Hamel

Con la guerra contra las mujeres en pleno apogeo, las mujeres están luchando a todo dar. Las amenazas a la salud y a los derechos reproductivos, especialmente a un aborto seguro y legal y al control de la natalidad y las actitudes reaccionarias hacia la mujer se han recibido con ira y fuerte resistencia por mujeres y hombres aliados a través de los Estados Unidos.

El 1 de marzo, al inicio del Mes de la Historia de la Mujer, el Senado, de mayoría demócrata, por una votación de 51-48 rechazó la llamada “Acta de Respeto por los Derechos de Conciencia”, que habría permitido a cualquier plan de seguro o empleador, con o sin afiliación religiosa, denegar cobertura para cualquier servicio de atención médica o disposición a la que se opusieran en base a “sus creencias religiosas o convicciones morales”. El senador Roy Blunt de Missouri presentó esto como una enmienda al Acta de Protección de Pacientes y de Asistencia Asequible del 2010 (denominado plan de salud nacional) y lo adjuntaron a un proyecto de ley de transporte para este año.

Esto sucedió luego de un febrero lleno de debates en el Congreso y comentarios públicos sobre el derecho de las mujeres a los anticonceptivos en el plan de salud. Fuerzas reaccionarias contra la mujer se enfrentaron a las mujeres que defienden su derecho básico a la atención de salud, salud reproductiva y control de la natalidad.

El presidente Barack Obama había anunciado el 20 de enero que todas las instituciones con afiliación religiosa que sirven a la población en general y reciben fondos federales y estatales, tienen que proveer cobertura gratis de control de la natalidad como parte de la atención sanitaria preventiva en todos los planes de salud del empleado. La Conferencia Estadounidense de Obispos Católicos, compuesta solo de hombres, se alborotó, denunciando la medida como un ataque a la “libertad religiosa”. Pronto se les unieron los candidatos presidenciales republicanos, los fundamentalistas cristianos y judíos, los políticos reaccionarios en el Congreso y otros elementos de extrema derecha como miembros del Partido del Té.

Este fue un ataque reaccionario contra el derecho de las mujeres trabajadoras a la cobertura de anticonceptivos en sus planes de atención médica proporcionados por el empleador y también a todos los derechos y la autonomía de la mujer.

El 10 de febrero, el Presidente cedió con una concesión. Anunció que las miles de escuelas con afiliaciones religiosas, universidades, hospitales, centros de salud a largo plazo y de beneficencia afectados por el plan de salud no se les requerirán que proporcionen dicha cobertura; en su lugar, las mujeres que trabajan para estos empleadores podrían obtener control de la natalidad directamente a través de sus compañías de seguros.

Sin embargo, esta concesión no

fue suficiente para que la Iglesia Católica, dominada por hombres y otros reaccionarios que quieren controlar y hacer retroceder a las mujeres y sus derechos.

Millones de personas se indignaron al ver el espectáculo de una audiencia el 16 de febrero convocada por el Comité de Reforma de Gobierno y Supervisión de la Casa de Representantes sobre el efecto del nuevo reglamento sobre la salud de la mujer. A la única mujer programada para dar testimonio no la dejaron hablar. Sólo figuras religiosas masculinas que se oponían a la cobertura de control de la natalidad se les permitió dar testimonio. Dos mujeres representantes se retiraron del evento, y fotografías del panel de hombres se multiplicaron en el Internet, la televisión y en medios impresos.

Posteriormente, los Demócratas arreglaron para que la testigo expulsada, la estudiante de derecho de la Universidad de Georgetown Sandra Fluke, declarara el 23 de febrero ante el Comité de Política y Dirección Democrático. Después de su testimonio, en un frenesí muy publicitado, el intolerante reaccionario Rush Limbaugh calificó a Fluke de “prostituta” y “zorra” en su programa nacional de radio e hizo otros comentarios inflamatorios y misóginos sobre la sexualidad de la mujer y la anticoncepción.

La indignación fue rápida. Surgió un movimiento de masas condenando a Limbaugh y a su fanatismo anti-mujer. Sus patrocinadores corporativos fueron inundados con las demandas de mujeres y hombres exigiendo que se retiraran del show de Limbaugh o enfrentarían las consecuencias económicas. El 11 de marzo, unos 50 patrocinadores habían retirado sus anuncios, y dos estaciones habían abandonado el show de Limbaugh, a pesar de sus “disculpas” a Fluke — en las que afirmaba haber usado palabras equivocadas para describirla.

Aumentan ataques contra el derecho al aborto en los estados

La ofensiva de la derecha contra el

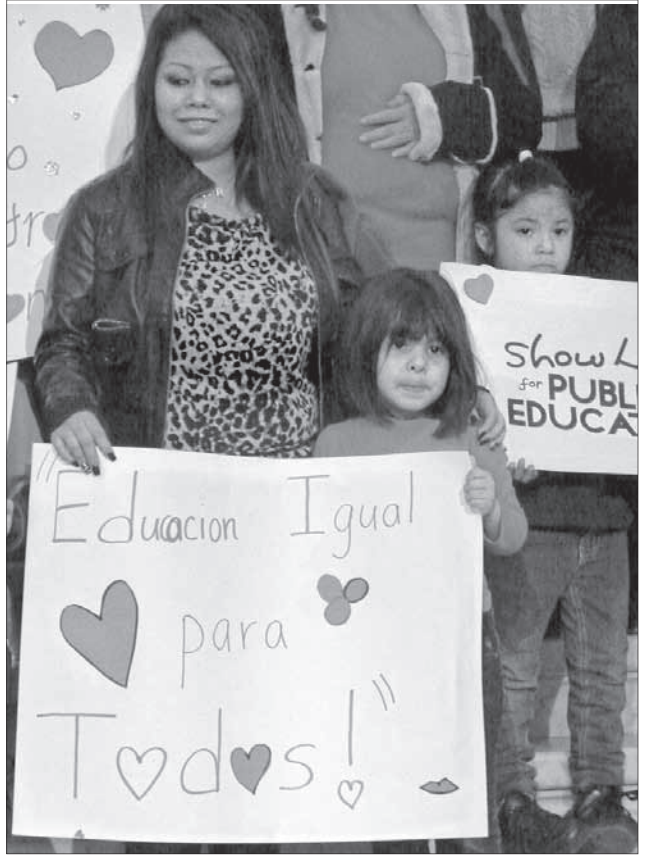
control de la natalidad y el derecho al aborto sigue rabiosamente en muchos estados. Planned Parenthood (Maternidad Planificada), debido a que un 3 por ciento de sus servicios son abortos, ha sido atacada no sólo a nivel nacional, sino también en muchos estados. Planned Parenthood es la única fuente de atención médica para millones de mujeres de escasos recursos en Estados Unidos.

En Texas, por ejemplo, una nueva ley que entrará en vigor el 14 de marzo, quitará los fondos a las clínicas de Planned Parenthood. Ese estado también ha visto el cierre de “más de una docena de instalaciones que proporcionan atención médica a las mujeres pobres” debido a recortes presupuestarios.

(Prensa Asociada, 11 de marzo) Estas instalaciones médicas proporcionaban anticonceptivos, así como exámenes para detectar cáncer ginecológico y otros servicios vitales de salud para las mujeres de bajos ingresos.

Una nueva táctica de terror del ala derecha en muchos estados está obligando a las mujeres a ver innecesarios ultrasonidos del feto antes de que se les permita tener un aborto. El gobernador de Virginia Bob McDonnell firmó un tal proyecto de ley el 7 de marzo. Sin embargo, había sido modificado para permitir que la mujer rechace una ecografía “transvaginal”. Este invasivo procedimiento es ampliamente condenado y se le ha llamado “violación por mandado estatal” si se le fuerza a una mujer. Cuando un millar de personas se reunieron el 3 de marzo en el Capitolio estatal en Richmond para protestar contra la legislación, fueron confrontadas por la policía con pleno equipo antidisturbios, que detuvo a 31 personas en lo que era una manifestación pacífica.

En Georgia, el tiempo cuando se permite el acceso al aborto se ha reducido de 26 semanas de gestación a 20 semanas. El 7 de marzo, el Senado Estatal aprobó otras dos leyes limitando los derechos reproductivos. Una prohíbe cobertura de aborto para las trabajadoras del estado bajo su seguro de salud y la otra impide que las trabajadoras en instituciones religiosas privadas exijan pagos de seguro para control de la natalidad, invalidando así el compromiso anunciado por el Presidente Obama. Las ocho mujeres senadoras demócratas de Georgia abandonaron la sala en protesta cuando el Senado pasó estas leyes.



MO FOTO: JOE PIETTE

Loretta Ross, Coordinadora Nacional del Colectivo SisterSong para la justicia reproductiva, declaró: “En Georgia estamos sintiendo los golpes de esta guerra contra la mujer que está recorriendo todo el país. Y las mujeres legisladoras que anoche abandonaron la reunión en protesta, realmente se levantaron por nosotras. Y había algunos hombres en la legislatura que se levantaron por nosotras también. Pero fue en vano, porque las leyes fueron aprobadas, y ahora tenemos que luchar, luchar, luchar”. (democracynow.org, 8 de marzo)

Una marcha al capitolio estatal de Georgia ha sido convocada para el 12 de marzo para “protestar el acallar a las mujeres y esta guerra contra la mujer. Estamos llamándola ‘Caminar en nuestros zapatos’, porque ellos realmente no están prestando atención a la situación que las mujeres están realmente sufriendo”, dijo Ross.

Mujeres obreras, mujeres pobres, mujeres de color y de nacionalidades oprimidas han sido señaladas para ataques por la derecha, y ahora están participando en una creciente lucha para exigir justicia reproductiva y cuidado de salud para todos/as.

En este año de elecciones presidenciales, el Partido Demócrata ha aseverado que está haciendo una campaña para ganar los votos de la mujer — lo que no debería ser difícil, dado el récord anti-mujer de los Republicanos.

Sin embargo, los Demócratas fueron responsables de uno de los ataques más crueles contra las mujeres pobres en tiempos recientes: la llamada reforma de bienestar, iniciada bajo Bill Clinton, que ha forzado a casi 2 millones de mujeres y sus hijos/as a vivir en “pobreza extrema”, definida como tratar de sobrevivir con menos de 2 dólares al día.

La lucha debe quedarse en las calles y enfrentar los crímenes del capitalismo — racismo, desempleo y falta de vivienda, que deben ser erradicados para que exista una verdadera libertad reproductiva y justicia para todas las mujeres. □



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